



Metropolitan King County Council

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August 1, 2003

Dennis Braddock
Secretary
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
PO Box 45322
Olympia, WA 98504-5322

Dear Secretary Braddock,

We are writing to express our adamant objection to the Department of Social and Health Services last-minute proposal to site transitional housing for predatory sex offenders (Secure Community Transition Facility, or SCTF) in the heart of the state's largest city.

The handling of this matter by DSHS has been disappointing to say the least. DSHS should have done its homework, reviewed appropriate sites, prepared itself to answer its critics, made a difficult decision, announced a site, and sited the facility. Instead, the agency's indecision has torn apart communities in anger and anguish, with Seattle being the most recent casualty.

Now DSHS says that a decision will be made by September among the four remaining sites. The neighboring communities near Orillia Road and Peasley Canyon have had seven months to respond to being listed; North Bend has had three months. Yet DSHS now gives the 166,000 residents of South and West Seattle only six weeks - in the height of the summer - to analyze your proposal and prepare a response. Seven days ago we received notice that you have set the two mandatory hearings on this matter for August 11 and August 21, at a time when the fewest neighbors are in town.

The State should seek to house these mentally ill and predatory sex offenders in a manner which minimizes the emotional impact and actual physical threat to the largest number of residents in King County. Many local leaders believe that the best solution would be to locate the facility in Grouse Ridge, four miles east of North Bend. Locating the facility at a State-owned facility in the Forest Production District would make it possible to minimize the number of citizens impacted.

When you announced the Grouse Ridge site there was resistance. Of course. There has been resistance to every site you have proposed. Throughout this process opponents of the previously identified three sites have repeated the assertion that if the SCTF were to be sited in an industrial zone then that would be fine, no one would be harmed, no one's safety would be jeopardized, children and schools would be safe, residents could be more closely monitored, etc.

The assertion that an industrial zone is safer was politically manufactured and has always been false. To place the SCTF in an industrial zone does not mean that the facility is no longer a threat to the public. In fact, the proposal to SCTF at 1st and Spokane poses a far greater risk to a far greater number of residents and visitors than any location proposed to date.

The 1st and Spokane site is within three miles of:

- **135,000** residents
- **29** public schools
- Over **500** school bus stops
- Approximately **170** licensed daycares
- Seattle University
- Three community colleges
- **255,000** daily employees

The proposed SCTF industrial site is also:

- Within two miles of Safeco Field (3.5 million fans attended Mariners games last year) and Seahawks stadium (500,000 fans last year). For sold-out games families routinely park as far away as 1st and Spokane and walk to either stadium.
- Within two miles of the King County Jail, which is our state's second largest mental health facility.
- Within one quarter-mile of 27 Metro bus routes serving over half of King County.
- Within two miles of the Seattle Bus Tunnel with routes serving the rest of King County.
- Within several hundred yards of both the Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail lines which could transport an escaped predator anywhere in the nation. In addition, Greyhound already runs their Amtrak bus lines from the King Street Railroad Station and will probably move all routes there in the near future.

Grouse Ridge

As recently as a few months ago, consensus had been emerging that the Grouse Ridge location (adjacent to the Fire Training Academy just east of North Bend) held the greatest promise because it located the SCTF the furthest from the public. Now DSHS seems to be backing away from the strengths of the Grouse Ridge site and seeking to locate the SCTF the closest to the public.

What follows is a comparison of some of the vital differences between Seattle's "industrial site" vs. the Grouse Ridge "residential site". Quoted are some of the statements opponents of the Grouse Ridge site made as reasons the site was not appropriate, to see how those issues compare to the proposed site at 1st and Spokane.

On Proximity to Residences

Rob McKenna, Dist. 6 – King County Journal, 7/12/03

"That's why I will continue to support the search for an industrial site for the sex-offender housing facility, rather than trying to pit different residential neighborhoods in the county against one another."

Letter to the Editor from North Bend resident – King County Journal, 4/20/03

“The most fiscally and morally responsible site would be an urban industrial site. An urban industrial site would be closer to services, police protection, fire protection, and have sewer/water rights. But most important it would not be near families, children and the elderly.”

In fact, the 1st and Spokane site is far closer to families, children and the elderly.

The Grouse Ridge site is four miles from the City of North Bend, population 4,700. 1st and Spokane is two miles south of downtown Seattle. 135,000 people live within three miles of 1st and Spokane, while 2,421 people live within three miles of the Grouse Ridge site.

The nearest residence from the Spokane Street site is within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, just to the east, on Beacon Hill. There are homes within $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the north and south in SODO and Georgetown, and West Seattle homes are just $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles to the west. The Rainier Valley, Mt. Baker, Leschi, Madrona, Central Area, and Denny Regrade neighborhoods are within three miles. Mercer Island, population 22,036, is within four miles – the same distance as the City of North Bend is from Grouse Ridge

On Proximity to Schools:

City of North Bend, Resolution No. 922 – 2/18/03

WHEREAS, the Fire Training Academy is classified as a private school by the King County Assessor; and

WHEREAS, the Fire Training Academy has both Boy Scout Troops and summer camp groups visit the facility for training 2 to 3 times per year.

Snoqualmie Valley School Dist. #410, Resolution No. 650 – 2/18/03

WHEREAS, the proposed site of a Secure Community Transition Facility for Sexual Offenders is one (1) mile from our K-12 school bus stop at Valley Camp on SE Lake Dorothy Road; and,

WHEREAS, there are numerous school bus stops along SE Edgewick Road, and there is a school bus stop serving several families near Twin Falls State Park that is two (2) miles from the proposed site for the Secure Community Transition Facility for Sexual Offenders; and,

*There are **two** school bus stops within two miles of Grouse Ridge, and 40 within three miles. There are 20 school bus stops within 1 mile of the Spokane Street site, 300 within 2 miles of the site, and well over 500 within 3 miles. There are 29 public schools within three miles of 1st and Spokane, and none within three miles of Grouse Ridge. Seattle University, South Seattle Community College, Central Seattle Community College, and Seattle Vocational Institute are all within three miles of 1st and Spokane.*

Letter from Day Care Operator Representing North Bend and Upper Snoqualmie Daycares – 3/28/03

“Our 21 facilities represent 650 children. . . For being in the “rural woods” our community does have a great deal of young children. We oppose the SCTF facility at exit 38 because of the proximity to these children. If one of the residents of this facility should escape, the possibility of easily accessible victims would be enormous.”

There are approximately 170 state-licensed day care facilities within 3 miles of 1st and Spokane. It is unclear whether any of the above referenced 21 facilities are within three miles of Grouse Ridge.

On Proximity to Employees

David Irons, Dist. 12 – King County Council Press Release, 7/15/03

“Siting the facility in a highly urbanized industrial area will minimize the potential harm to the most vulnerable elements of our society, while also ensuring maximum supervision for the inmates and access to social services and jobs.”

“Our View: Safety comes first on site for predators”, King County Journal, 4/15/03

“There is an answer: The state should put such a facility in an industrial area. The state should accept the fact that an industrial site is the only real option to this unpleasant chore. It will cost more, but the public’s safety is worth it.”

1st and Spokane is within a quarter mile of 2,400 employees, one mile of 25,400 employees, two miles of 73,000 employees, and three miles of 255,000 employees. A common misperception surrounding the SCTF is that all the residents would be pedophiles. In fact, a significant portion of these predators are serial rapists which prey on adult women.

On Proximity to Tourism and Recreation

Snoqualmie Valley Chamber of Commerce letter to Executive Ron Sims, 5/7/03

Many of our businesses have to rely on family tourism to stay afloat. Here are some basic facts about our family tourism industry:

- Mount Si is the second-most hiked trail in the state.
- The trails around the facility host thousands of bikers and hikers from all over Puget Sound.
- The Factory Stores attract nearly a million and a half visitors a year.
- Millions of families stop here for meals and gas on their travels to the Summit at Snoqualmie and Eastern Washington; we have one of the busiest McDonald’s in the state.

Letter to the Editor from North Bend resident – King County Journal, 3/4/03

“During the summer this is a very popular day site for picnics and hikes for families.”

The area around the Spokane Street site is home to more tourist attractions than the trails and campsites at Grouse Ridge. If one were to draw a 2-mile radius around the area, one would find that both the Mariners and Seahawks Stadiums, the Exhibition hall, Camp Long and 2 golf courses all fall within that distance. Extend the radius to 3 miles, and Alki Beach, Pioneer Square, most of downtown Seattle including tourist destinations like the Pike Place Market and the Waterfront are included. One could assume that 50 - 75% of the 27 million out of state visitors to King County every year visit one or more of the above sites. Four million fans attended Mariner and Seahawk games last year.

On Proximity to Other Facilities – Equitable Distribution

Letter to the Editor from North Bend resident – King County Journal, 3/5/03

“Echo Glen, five miles from Grouse Ridge, houses kids/adults ages 10-21, who have committed multiple and/or serious crimes. To put another site just east of us isn’t reasonable for such a rural area.”

Letter to the Editor from North Bend resident – King County Journal, 3/8/03

“I agree with the south King County residents that repeatedly suggested to our council representatives to provide space for these people away from children. It would make much more sense to build such a facility in an industrial neighborhood such as Harbor Island or next to shady establishments on First Avenue in Seattle.”

Letter to the Editor from North Bend resident – King County Journal, 3/4/03

“Our community has been the target for undesirable land use activities, ranging from mines, rock crushing, biosolids, applications to topless bars, prisons and garbage dumps. We have already gotten our fair share.”

The law also requires that “great weight be given to sites that are the farthest removed from any risk potential activity.” RCW 71.09.250(8-9) specifies that equitable distribution of SCTF facilities means avoiding concentration of “similar facilities” – defined as “residential facility beds operated by the Department of Corrections or the Mental Health Division of the Department of Social and Health Services.” The law also references “the number of registered sex offenders classified as level 2 or level 3 and the number of sex offenders registered as homeless” in the affected jurisdiction.

According to the King County Sheriff, there are 267 registered homeless sex offenders in King County, most of whom are registered to live near downtown Seattle. Within three miles of 1st and Spokane are located the King County Jail, and numerous emergency shelters and missions for the homeless and mentally ill. A methadone clinic is located just over one mile from 1st and Spokane.

By far the greatest number of homeless and mentally ill adults congregating on the street in King County and all of Washington can be found in the Pioneer Square area. On a summer afternoon fifty sleeping bags can be seen unfurled in “Muscatel Meadows” next to the King County Courthouse. Contrary to some assumptions, this does not mean that Seattle “produces” the homeless and mentally ill. It means that Seattle has tolerated and accepted those less fortunate who statistically derive from every community in the County and the State.

According to a 1998 King County study, Seattle was the location for:

- *90% of the total emergency shelter beds in King County*
- *72% of the public and subsidized housing units in King County*
- *76% of the total temporary housing services for the homeless*

In conclusion, we urge you to resist the false premise that locating the SCTF in an industrial site means that it will not impact large numbers of Washington residents. Placing the SCTF in the midst of a city of 550,000 and an employment center of 250,000 magnifies the risk, magnifies the liability, and magnifies the pain.

Place the SCTF where it threatens the fewest people, not the most.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Pelz', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dwight Pelz
King County Councilmember

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dow Constantine', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dow Constantine
King County Councilmember